

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 05 CAIRO 001232

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/26/2016

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PARM](#) [PGOV](#) [IS](#) [IR](#) [EG](#) [KNNP](#) [IAEA](#) [UNSC](#)

SUBJECT: A/S RADEMAKER'S BILATERAL NONPROLIFERATION
DISCUSSIONS IN EGYPT

Classified by DCM Stuart Jones for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

Summary

¶1. (C) Acting Assistant Secretary for International Security and Nonproliferation Stephen Rademaker discussed Iran's nuclear weapons program with Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit and held bilateral nonproliferation discussions with the Assistant Minister for Multilateral Affairs Ambassador Naela Gabr on February 15-16. During the Iran-focused discussions, senior GOE officials confirmed Egypt's opposition to Iran's efforts to acquire nuclear weapons (efforts Egypt did not dispute are underway in Iran), but pressed the U.S. to continue to keep Israel's nuclear program and a Middle East Nuclear Weapons Free Zone (MENWFZ) on the international agenda. Aboul Gheit said Iranian possession of nuclear weapons would likely prompt one or more Arab states to seek such weapons. The discussions also addressed the IAEA (safeguards and the Additional Protocol), the Conference on Disarmament, export controls, the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI), conventional weapons trafficking, landmines, the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), and the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). The delegations agreed to continue close coordination on Iran, and to meet again in 2007, in part to consult ahead of the first preparatory meeting (Prepcom) for the next NPT Review Conference. End summary.

Iran Discussions with Foreign Minister Aboul Gheit

¶2. (C) Acting A/S Stephen Rademaker, joined by the Ambassador, Kurt Kessler and Ethan Sontag of the ISN Bureau, and Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Jack David, began bilateral nonproliferation meetings in Cairo by discussing Iran's nuclear weapons program with Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit on February 15. Aboul Gheit confirmed that GOE policy opposes proliferation of nuclear weapons and agreed that Iran is seeking to build nuclear weapons. But Aboul Gheit also accused the U.S. of "shielding" Israel in nonproliferation discussions and said that the U.S. focus on Iran alone would encourage others in the region to pursue similar programs. A/S Rademaker said that the U.S. does consistently urge Israel, along with India and Pakistan, to accede to the NPT, but accession by Israel is unlikely until there is a peace settlement in the region. A/S Rademaker emphasized that a nuclear weapons-capable Iran, particularly given the rhetoric of the current Iranian regime, would only further destabilize the region and push us farther from the objective of encouraging Israel's signature of the NPT. He stressed the danger of justifying inaction on the Iranian nuclear issue until Israel moves forward on the NPT, as this would likely give Iran sufficient time to realize its nuclear weapons ambitions.

¶3. (C) A/S Rademaker also noted that some of Egypt's Gulf neighbors view the Iranian threat with grave concern. He shared that some in the Persian Gulf region predict that Egypt and Turkey would also deploy nuclear weapons if Iran succeeds. Aboul Gheit agreed that a nuclear Iran would prompt others to pursue a nuclear weapons program, but rejected the suggestion that Egypt would be among such countries. Proclaiming himself "convinced" of the need to stop Iran and the low probability of making progress on Israel in the short term, Aboul Gheit said "the only thing we ask is for repetition of references" to a nuclear weapons free zone in the Middle East. "I don't expect you to press them (Israel) to drop their program now, but we need to have hope for 5, 10, 15, 20 years away." Noting the pressure of public opinion, Aboul Gheit asked the U.S. to find a way Egypt can support the U.S. on this without appearing to be ignoring Israel. Reiterating this point, Aboul Gheit noted that he was looking for "references to Israel (and its nuclear program), not action." A/S Rademaker pointed to the language of the February 4 IAEA resolution on Iran as evidence that we can work with Egypt if it limits its objective to keeping Israel on the international agenda. Aboul Gheit then warned against military strikes in Iran, saying it would make Iraq look like "child's play." He also asked the U.S. to ensure that Russia and China are on board

with any proposed actions because without their endorsement, Egypt's support would be precarious. Throughout the conversation, Aboul Gheit made repeated references to the "Arab street's" perception of Western double standards, which, for many Muslims, served as justification for Iran's nuclear weapons ambitions. Arab governments, he said, would have to be sensitive to this perception.

14. (C) Turning to the 2005 NPT Review Conference, Aboul Gheit attributed the failure, in part, to the lack of coordination between the U.S. and Egypt. By contrast, he noted, dialogue before the 2000 Review Conference had been excellent, and the result was an agreed statement at the conference. A/S Rademaker expressed U.S. displeasure with Egypt's conduct at the Review Conference but agreed that close cooperation would be key to avoiding a repeat of the 2005 experience.

Iran

15. (C) Following the introductory meeting with Aboul Gheit, A/S Rademaker and Assistant Minister (A/M) Gabr opened the nonproliferation dialogue. Egypt's delegation included: Deputy Assistant Minister for Multilateral Affairs Ihab Fouzy, Disarmament Office Director Dr. Hossam Aly, Obaida Dandardawy (Disarmament), Omar Amer Youssef (the Minister's Advisor on Disarmament), General Sherif Bedir (Directorate of Military Intelligence), and General Younis al Masry (Directorate of Military Intelligence). The delegations resumed discussions of Iran with a U.S. briefing on Iran's nuclear weapons program, highlighting evidence upon which the U.S. bases its assessment that Iran is most likely to produce its first nuclear weapons early-to-mid next decade.

16. (C) GOE Perspective: A/M Gabr thanked the delegation for the briefing and said it confirmed Egypt's decision to support the IAEA resolution. She asked the U.S. to continue to provide such briefings so that the FM can make informed decisions on Iran and stressed that Egypt opposes nuclear weapons proliferation (by Iran or any other nation). A/M Gabr also reaffirmed Egypt's support for the legitimate rights of countries under the NPT to develop nuclear power and pressed that the Iran matter must not be addressed in isolation. Rather, the international community through multilateralism should deal with all similar files -- including Israel -- in a comprehensive way. Dr. Aly added that universality of the NPT is the only solution to preventing another Iran and said Israel's nuclear program "provoked" Iran's program. Dr. Aly and A/M Gabr also noted that in Arab public opinion, Israel's program gives legitimacy to Iran's program. Reiterating Aboul Gheit's earlier statement, A/M Gabr said that to maintain support in the Arab street, we must find a way to discuss Israel, to keep it on the agenda, and to show that there is no double standard. Dr. Aly asked whether a decision by Iran to withdraw from the NPT would put it on the same footing as Israel.

17. (C) U.S. Response: On implications of an Iranian decision to withdraw from the NPT, A/S Rademaker said that withdrawal would not cure Iran's violation; the situation would be anomalous to North Korea's withdrawal from the NPT after it had been caught in violation of the treaty. As a base-line, the U.S. urges all states, including Israel, Pakistan, and India, to accede to the NPT, A/S Rademaker assured. But he also cautioned against creating a perception of a linkage between progress on the Iran matter and progress with Israel and its nuclear policy. Disagreeing with the assertion that Israel "provoked" Iran's nuclear program, A/S Rademaker said the U.S. and some of Egypt's regional neighbors believe that Iran's program may have other regional targets and that Iran may simply want nuclear weapons because it believes that this is commensurate with its place in the world. He also suggested that the Arab League and GCC could play a more proactive role in pressuring Iran. The reality, A/S Rademaker said, is that without compliance with the NPT, there will never be NPT universality or a MENWFZ. He emphasized that given Iran's current noncompliance, Israel would never agree to accede to the NPT. Israeli accession is only likely to occur when Iran's program has been stopped and there is peace in the region.

Multilateralism and Iran

18. (C) A/M Gabr noted (more than once) Egypt's preference that the IAEA continue to handle the Iran matter and expressed concern that turning the Iran file over to the UNSC would damage the IAEA's credibility. She also suggested that a group of regional states might consider meeting to discuss the Iranian threat. Obaida Dandardawy asked if the U.S. is concerned over threats that Iran will deny the IAEA access to sites following referral to the Security Council. DMI's

General Bedir alleged the U.S. had "rushed" the issue to the UNSC. Dr. Aly suggested that a more lucrative economic package and security guarantees would entice Iran to cooperate.

¶ 19. (C) A/S Rademaker confirmed U.S. support for multilateralism (including continued IAEA involvement in solving the Iran matter), noting that the purpose of UNSC involvement was to reinforce, not replace, the IAEA. Citing Iran's history of non-cooperation, A/S Rademaker explained that the U.S. had not "rushed" for a referral to the UNSC, and had patiently pursued a diplomatic solution for three years. As an indication of U.S. commitment to finding such a solution, A/S Rademaker said the U.S. would support the current Russian proposal so long as it continued to exclude the possibility of Iran developing uranium enrichment on its own soil and did not provide Iran with technical know-how. A/S Rademaker outlined the U.S. view on next steps in the UN, starting with a call on Iran to meet all requests made by the IAEA Board. If Iran continues to spurn such cooperation, the UNSC should consider mandating full cooperation. As for sanctions, A/S Rademaker said that although discussion of this is premature, possibilities include limiting Iran's technical access to nuclear assistance and imposing a travel ban on Iran's leaders. On Iran's threats to reduce cooperation, Kessler said Iran had already stopped its provisional implementation of the Additional Protocol, but Iran still has an obligation to allow the IAEA to do what is necessary to meet its obligations under its NPT-required safeguards agreement. In response to Rademaker's suggestion that lessons from the "Libya model" may apply to Iran, Dr. Aly protested that this would send the wrong message -- if you get caught trying to build a nuclear program, there are no ramifications, only rewards.

Egypt's Priorities; The Additional Protocol

¶ 10. (C) In reviewing Egypt's nonproliferation priorities, Dr. Aly stressed the need for progress towards a MENWFZ and said Egypt is not prepared to adopt the Additional Protocol (AP) absent Israel's accession to the NPT. Dr. Aly said Egypt believes that signing the AP will detract from the discussion of universality. He also pressed for support for an IAEA General Conference Resolution urging all states to adopt a Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement (CSA). Dr. Aly criticized alleged U.S. opposition to any reference in the UN that could be construed as pressuring Israel to join the NPT. Dr. Aly complained that plans for an IAEA-sponsored forum to discuss other regions' experiences in creating WMD-free zones had stalled because of Israeli opposition to the original agenda. The U.S. delegation urged the Egyptians to re-engage with Israel and the IAEA regarding the forum.

Conference on Disarmament

¶ 11. (C) A/S Rademaker told Assistant Minister Gabr that Egypt's linkage of progress on the Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty to other issues is "holding hostage" progress in the Conference on Disarmament (CD). A/M Gabr noted that the FMCT is not a priority, but said Egypt does support it. Ultimately, Gabr said, Egypt wants a balanced approach to the agenda items, inclusion of verification in the FMCT, and a commitment to addressing the issues within the CD by consensus. A/S Rademaker pressed the U.S. position that the FMCT should not include verification because it is not realistically achievable. Discussing verification allows countries such as Pakistan and India that produce fissile material to buy more time to produce, he said. A/M Gabr responded favorably to the A/S's suggestion that the U.S. would table a proposal to negotiate an FMCT, but declined the suggestion that Egypt (a member of the G-21) co-sponsor the proposal.

Proliferation Security Initiative; EXBS Program

¶ 12. (C) Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense David briefed the group on PSI and urged Egypt to endorse the Statement of Interdiction Principles. DMI's General Bedir expressed concern that interdiction would conflict with international law and asked about the extent of pressure from the U.S. for nations to comply with interdiction requests. A/S Rademaker emphasized the decision to participate in a PSI interdiction is a voluntary and sovereign one. The U.S. delegation further elaborated that endorsement of the SOP constitutes a political rather than a legal commitment, and U.S. PSI experts would be willing to further discuss the matter with Egyptian officials, including possibly via digital video conference. A/M Gabr said an interagency group would "seriously study" the PSI and be in touch should they like to

discuss it further.

¶13. (C) The U.S. delegation described the Export Control and Border Security (EXBS) program broadly, focusing on technical assistance that may be available to bolster Egypt's capabilities. The U.S. delegation noted that funds had already been allocated for FY06 and FY07 for potential EXBS projects in Egypt. A/M Gabr said she would be happy to receive detailed information on the program. (Note: The U.S. delegation later provided Post with programmatic details regarding EXBS. Post passed this information to MFA officials for their consideration. End note.)

Landmines; Conventional Weapons

¶14. (C) A/M Gabr confirmed that Egypt does not trade in or produce any anti-personnel mines and flagged Egypt's own problem with mines in the Western Desert. Expressing frustration with the recent Croatia meeting on the Ottawa Convention, Dr. Aly noted: countries do not have the capacity or money to comply with Article 7, 90 percent of the Croatia attendees were there to request money, and even Croatia was cited at the meeting for trying to sell mines on the internet. A/S Rademaker expressed surprise that the Ottawa Convention members are not more proactive in helping Egypt address its problem.

¶15. (C) UN Register: Dr. Aly said Egypt is reconsidering its position on inserting WMD in the UN Register of Conventional Arms. A/S Rademaker welcomed this news, noting that given the likely clandestine nature of any such transfers, the WMD reference is not useful.

¶16. (C) Conventional Weapons Trade with DPRK: A/S Rademaker described U.S. efforts to curtail DPRK conventional arms sales, which provide hard currency for its ballistic missile and WMD programs. He asked Egypt to refrain from engaging in any military trade with the DPRK adn to shut down any Korea Mining Development Trading Organization (KOMID) offices that might exist in Egypt. Assistant Minister Gabr declined to give this assurance and suggested that the U.S. would better achieve its objectives with the DPRK by offering humanitarian and economic assistance.

CTBT, CWC, BWC

¶17. (C) A/M Gabr said that until Israel accedes to the CWC and BWC, Egypt is not willing to become a full party to either convention. (Note: Egypt has signed but not ratified the BWC. It has not signed the CWC. End note) Egypt will, however, continue to adhere to the spirit of the conventions and has no intention to employ either BW or CW. She pressed the A/S for information on Israel's reluctance to sign the conventions and stressed the need for "balance." Gabr contended that Egypt has consistently made concessions while Israel provides little in return. She said this has hardened public opinion against accepting yet another nonproliferation convention until Israel shows a similar willingness. On the CTBT, Dr. Aly said Egypt believes the Senate rejected the treaty because the U.S. wanted to conduct safety and reliability tests. He added that experts believe that the CTBT is verifiable and also expressed concern over rumors the U.S. would not contribute to on-site inspections. He also complained that the U.S. and Israel blocked Egypt's move to mention the NPT in the final paragraph of the CTBT.

¶18. (C) On testing, A/S Rademaker said the reluctance to accept the CTBT arises from the view that while the U.S. would abide by its treaty obligations, others may sign but then try to test anyway in secret. Rademaker confirmed that the U.S. is the largest contributor to monitoring and has no plans to end its moratorium on nuclear testing. On the CWC and BWC, Rademaker said that Egypt could apply greater pressure to Israel to ratify by becoming a full party itself. He also offered the possibility of U.S. assistance to Egypt to permit it to come into compliance with the CWC, should Egypt accede to the treaty. A/S Rademaker added that Israel is concerned about the Syrian chemical weapons program and is not signing for tactical reasons. Dr. Aly pushed back on this point, asserting that the more committed Egypt gets on paper, the bigger the regional power imbalance becomes because of Israel's nuclear arsenal.

Next Steps

¶19. (C) The bilateral discussions concluded with a review of outstanding action items and next steps. A/S Rademaker proposed that:
-- the U.S. and Egypt continue close consultation on Iran;

-- Egypt consider trying to revisit the idea of the IAEA-sponsored Forum on the creation of a Middle East WMD Free Zone;
-- the U.S. could arrange a DVC with GOE officials on the PSI;
-- the U.S. will deliver a paper on the EXBS program;
-- the parties meet again before the 2007 NPT Preparatory Conference;
-- the U.S. and Egypt should continue to hold such wide-ranging nonproliferation dialogues on a regular basis, perhaps annually.

A/M Gabr agreed with all proposals except the DVC on PSI (noting the GOE would study this internally) and asked for more vocal U.S. support for the MENWFZ and for appreciation of Egypt's support in multilateral fora.

Comment

¶20. (C) The U.S.-Egypt dialogue offered a useful venue for both delegations to convey their positions on a wide range of nonproliferation issues. In discussions on the margins, GOE officials frequently noted that the opportunity to address such matters in a bilateral context would be an important step in avoiding confrontation in multilateral fora. While senior GOE officials appeared convinced of Iran's nuclear weapons pursuit, they were also forthright in noting that a tougher Arab stance against Iran's program can only occur in the context of at least references to the objective of a MENWFZ. The USG should follow up expeditiously on agreed areas of possible cooperation, such as EXBS, to consolidate the momentum gained in these talks.

¶21. (U) A/S Rademaker cleared this cable.
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